

# **A POSITIVE ATTITUDE-AD-BRAND RELATIONSHIP BY CUSTOMISING BANNER ADVERTISEMENT DESIGN – AN EMPIRICAL STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

The objective of this paper is to test the proposition that the design aspects of a banner advertisement drive Internet users to form positive attitudes toward the advertisement and the brand. Three familiar brands were used. Data was gathered through an online survey with a sample of 490 respondents. Covariance Structural Modelling results showed a positive attitude-ad-brand relationship. The findings indicate that customising banner advertisement design in terms of users' need for cognition (low, medium, high), goal-directed motive (information vs. entertainment), information processing strategy (visual vs. verbal) and personal involvement (low, medium, high) creates positive attitudes toward the advertisement and the brand. The findings support the proposition that customising web design enhances consumers' brand attitude.

## **Introduction**

In the Internet advertising literature, Roehm and Haugtvedt (1999) suggest the use of customised advertising messages based on consumers' personality. Customisation, in the advertising perspective, is referred to as the extent of responsiveness to and the potential to facilitate interpersonal communication (Heeter, 1989). According to Heeter (1989), customisation involves inserting the customer's name in various appropriate points in the web page presentation. However, although many Internet advertising researchers have recommended customisation little attention has been given to how customisation can be operationalised. To address these issues, we propose a research model employing individuals' need for cognition, goal-directed motives and preferred information processing strategy as a psychological mechanism that may explain how Internet advertising leads to attitude change and supports branding.

## **Research Model**

Raman (1996) confirmed that attitude toward advertising in general and components of attitude toward the advertisement influence the desired exposure to interactive advertisements. The study found that situational involvement, hedonism, interestingness and utilitarianism of the advertisement affected desired exposure differently, depending on the elements of the advertisement. This result also suggests that the appeal of the web page determines exposure to other pages or parts of the advertisement.

Previous consumer research studies (Lutz, Mackenzie and Belch, 1983; Mackenzie and Lutz, 1983; Mitchell and Olson, 1981; Moore and Hutchinson, 1983; Park and

Young, 1985; Shimp and Yokum, 1982) have suggested that brand attitude may be affected by consumers' attitude towards the advertisement. It is therefore reasonable to apply the same concept in the context of Internet advertising.

Recent evidence from Cho and Leckenby (2000) suggests that simple exposure to a banner advertisement without clicking did not change Internet users' initial brand attitude and purchase. Furthermore, they found that the brand attitude changed when users clicked on the banner advertisement in order to access the target advertisement, according to their likeability of the banner advertisement. Brand attitude should thus be a better of measure Internet advertising effectiveness than click-through rate and brand recall. Cho (1999) claimed that Internet users who are in high involvement situations are more likely to click advertisements in order to request information than those in low involvement situations. On the other hand, those in low involvement situations are more likely to click a banner when the banner advertisement is larger and has dynamic animation. Roehm (1999) confirmed that matching the tone and content of message to some aspect of a consumer yielded enhanced product evaluations and more positive attitudes. In addition, Petty and Wegener (1998) showed that matching a communication to the functional base of a relevant attitude can increase attention.

In a recent study on Web shopping, Ward and Lee (2000) found that Internet users reacted more favourably to familiar brands. Since the Internet is an information rich environment, it would be expected that Internet users tend to react more spontaneously to banner ads for familiar brands as compared to unfamiliar brands. This behaviour can be further explained by applying the concept of evoked set by Howard and Sheth (1969). The central proposition is that when faced with a large number of brands, consumers do not consider all the brands in turn when making a purchase, but use a simple heuristic to screen the brands to a smaller number that are considered for subsequent purchase.

Our study proposes that 'customising' a banner advertisement the presentation mode (in terms of creative and content such as *verbal* versus *visual* presentation, informational versus emotional appeal, low, medium or high animation) in relation to the users' individual difference in need for cognition, their goal-directed motives and preferred information processing strategies will result in positive change in attitude towards the advertisement and the brand. The following hypotheses, as illustrated in Figure 1, are tested in this research.

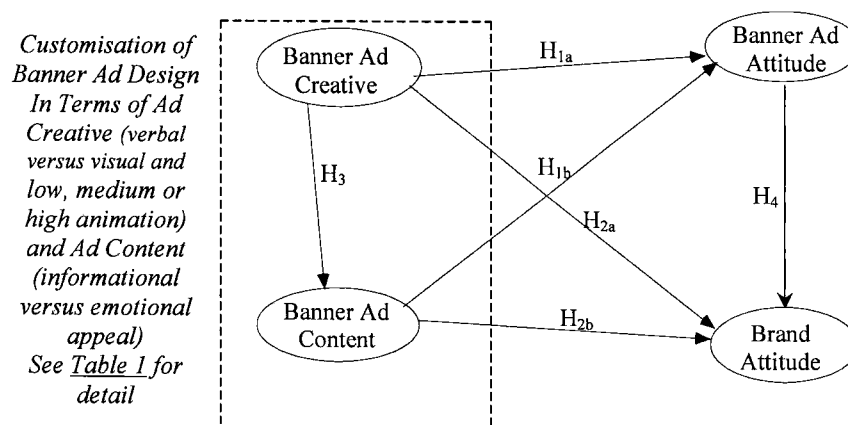


Figure 1 - Hypothesized Relationship of Customisation and Attitude-Ad-Brand Relationship  
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- H<sub>1a</sub>: The degree of customisation of banner advertisement creative is a positive predictor of attitude towards a banner advertisement.
- H<sub>1b</sub>: The degree of customisation of banner advertisement content is a positive predictor of attitude towards a banner advertisement.
- H<sub>2a</sub>: The degree of customisation of banner advertisement creative is a positive predictor of brand attitude.
- H<sub>2b</sub>: The degree of customisation of banner advertisement content is a positive predictor of brand attitude.
- H<sub>3</sub>: The customisation of a banner advertisement creative is positively related to customisation of banner advertisement content.
- H<sub>4</sub>: The Internet user's attitude towards a banner advertisement is positively related to brand attitude.

### **Research Design And Methodology**

Data were gathered using an online survey with a sample of 490. Two samples including a working adult group and a commercial online panel were used. The advertisement framework shown in Table 1 was employed as guideline when designing the banner advertisements. The advertising message content and presentation format were chosen to promote Internet users' comprehension of the brand persuasive information presented. Hence, the design of the advertising message required efficient use of human perceptual abilities by controlling their attention (selective attention) with relevant display techniques (advertisement format) to direct the users' information processing process.

Familiar Product/ Brand	Level of Product Involvement	Goal-directed Motives	Personality Traits	Information Processing Strategies	Advertisement Design Principles	
					Advertising Appeal	Banner Advertisements
Soft drink	Low	Entertainment	Low NC	Peripheral route information processing (visual processing)	Entertainment Oriented	<u>Image site</u> Contains More Visuals and Interactive Features
Computer	High	Information	High NC	Central route information processing (verbal processing)	Informational Oriented	<u>Informational site</u> Contains More Verbal Content and Less Interactive Features
Fashion Apparel	Medium	Information and Entertainment	Medium NC	A combination of central and peripheral route information processing (Both verbal and visual processing)	More Informational and Less Entertainment Oriented	<u>Combined Informational and Image site</u> Contains More Verbal Content and Interactive Features

NC – Need for Cognition

Table 1 – Classification of Stimuli Employed In Design of Banner Advertisements

Dynamic Logic (2001) suggested that prominent logos in each frame and a short animation loop enhanced brand awareness. Therefore, all banner advertisements contained two identical design properties with the actual company logo on the left side of the banner space and an animated actual (current) company slogan flashed across the centre of the banner to trigger respondents' brand familiarity. The design of the experimental banner advertisements is shown in Figure 2. Three brands were carefully selected by reason of their level of product involvement using high, medium and low levels. The product categories selected were computers, fashion apparel and soft drinks and three popular brands were used.

Three standard size banner advertisements of 460 x 55 pixels were created for this study. Each banner advertisement was created using different advertising themes and interactive features. The objective was to examine the differences in attitudes towards the banner advertisement and attitude towards the brand as a result of two forced exposures: first is to view and second is to click on the preferred banner advertisement. Because banner advertising is a prominent structural component on most web pages, animated advertisements that contained the actual company logo and

tagline are instrumental in drawing attention to the advertisement and attract the Internet user to click on the banner.

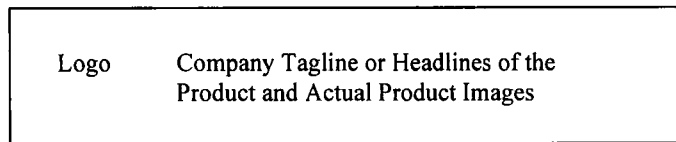


Figure 2 – Design of Banner Advertisement

The background colour used for all banner advertisements (or dominant colour of the banner) was white. The exception was allowed for the soft drink banner advertisement because the background colour (red) used was the exact colour of the actual brand to project the psychological effect of warm, sense of novelty and entertainment. In addition, interactive features such as animated images were included in the soft drink banner advertisement to catalyst and initiate immediate reaction (clicking on the banner ad). Even though the computer banner advertisement was purposively designed as an informative banner, a blue animated butterfly was built-in as a means of instructing the respondent's attention of the product benefits. Similarly, as for fashion apparel banner, blinking words of the product attributes were flashed to ensure users' attention.

This study used scales for measuring attitudinal responses developed by Gardner (1985), Mitchell (1986) and Cho (1999). As these scales were originally used to measure attitudes toward the brand for traditional media, they were modified to suit of Internet advertising. Cho's (1999) scales were directly used to measure attitudes toward the banner advertisement.

### Results

In judging the adequacy of model fit, larger CFI, TLI and NFI values (greater than 0.90) indicate good model fit. The normed Chi-square should not be greater than 5.0 (Wheaton, Muthen, Alvin and Summers, 1977) to indicate a good fit. Finally, the RMSEA value of less than or equal to 0.08 indicates a good fit. Low goodness-of-measures would therefore suggest that the model could be substantially improved. Overall, the model is considered to achieve adequate fit if it satisfies at least 3 goodness-of-fit indices.

In evaluating goodness of fit, the models show a good fit with the data. Figure 3 shows the standardised regression coefficients estimated by ML estimation together with the significance tests and the structural paths. For absolute fit measures, the model has above 0.90 levels of GFI (0.916). However, both normed Chi-square (6.505) and RMSEA (0.106) are high, indicating a poor fit per degree of freedom. Three of the incremental fit measures (NFI, TLI and CFI) confirmed that the model has acceptable level of goodness-of-fit. For example, NFI = 0.955, TLI = 0.944 and CFI = 0.962 indicate a good fit to the data.

The results of the CSM show that the standardized regression coefficients of all structural paths are significant. The relationships between the extent of banner advertisement creative customisation and attitude towards a banner advertisement ( $\beta = 0.492$ ,  $SE = 0.060$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ) and between the extent of banner advertisement content customisation and attitude towards a banner advertisement are both positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.444$ ,  $SE = 0.059$ ,  $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ). Therefore, based on these

The results support the importance of customising Internet advertising design to ensure the presentation mode (*verbal* versus *visual* presentation) matches Internet users' individual differences in cognition, goal-directed motives and information processing strategies to produce positive attitudinal responses. These findings support Roehm and Haugtvedt (1999) who recommended customisation of advertising messages based on consumers' personality.

This paper recommends the *attitude-ad-brand* approach to target audience definition. It is more sensible to identify a potential target audience using a combination of macro (demographic variables) and micro (personal characteristics in terms of personal relevance and need for cognition - two main constructs of Elaboration Likelihood Model developed by Petty and Cacioppo, 1986) segmentation. Personal relevance and need for cognition (ELM) moderate and predict whether an individual will rely on the central (verbal) or peripheral (visual) cues when presented with a persuasive communication.

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